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U.S. Commitments to Sell Aircraft to Israel, Saudi Arabia and Egypt

The United States indicated to Israel and to Saudi Arabia during the previous Administration that we would meet their needs for advanced fighter aircraft. ~~With Israel this~~ undertaking related to F-15 and F-16 aircraft; the commitment did not specify numbers of aircraft or dates of delivery.

The Sinai II Agreement with Israel states that the "United States Government will make every effort to be fully responsive, within the limits of its resources and Congressional authorization and appropriation, on an on-going and long-term basis, to Israel's military equipment and other defense requirements..." The Agreement also states that "the U.S. will view Israel's request sympathetically, including its request for advanced and sophisticated weapons." In the context of Sinai II, President Ford assured Israel that we would continue to supply advanced types of equipment, "such as the F-16."

Sinai II represented a reaffirmatiion of our commitment to Israel's security. In that context, F-16s were not a quid pro quo for Israeli flexibility, but were cited as illustrative of the kind of equipment we would be willing to supply.

In January 1976 President Ford approved the sale of 25 F-15s to Israel. At the same time he approved in principle the sale of F-16 aircraft without specifying the numbers to be sold or the timing of deliveries.

With respect to Saudi Arabia, the United States first agreed in 1974 to meet Saudi needs for an advanced fighter aircraft. We offered to provide briefings on available aircraft. Again, no commitments were made as to numbers or delivery schedules. The Saudi Government considered the F-14, F-15, F-16 and F-18 aircraft and submitted a formal request for the F-15 in February 1977.

In 1976 the Egyptian Government expressed interest in acquiring F-5 aircraft, but made no formal request. The United States acknowledged Egypt's interest, without making a formal reply.

The proposals to sell aircraft to each of the three countries reflect careful analysis of the military requirements of each one for an adequate number of air defense aircraft, taking into account the military balance in the region.

On the basis of our analysis, the security of Israel will not be jeopardized by any element of the proposed aircraft sale package. Israel will retain its substantial margin of military superiority, particularly air superiority, well into the 1980s.